**25th June 2023**

**Call to worship**

Let us burst to share the good news of Jesus
as we come into God’s presence today.
Let us not hide away in secret,
but shout from the rooftops
of God’s goodness to us.

**A gathering prayer**

Awesome God,
today we choose to come and worship you.
There is none like you; you are amazing.
Help us to follow you,
knowing the risks, not counting the costs,
but trusting that you walk always at our side.
**Amen.**

**A prayer of approach**

Our faith in our creator God draws us to worship.
Our faith in our redeemer God gathers us together.
Our faith in our loving God holds us close to each other.
Praise be to our Lord and God.
**Amen.**

**A prayer of adoration**

Lord God, you have borne our pains, shared our journeys, offered us unconditional love. You have breathed your Spirit into us, blessed us with the gift of your Son, you have sacrificed so much for us. We adore you and offer you our lives.
You have given us a vision of your kingdom, have offered us a way of life worth living, a loving to share, a presence at all times. We adore you and offer you our lives.
**Amen.**

**A prayer of confession and an Assurance of forgiveness**

**A prayer of confession**

In easy times, without fear or conflict, we are happy to stand up as Christians and follow you, our Almighty God.
When we face no threats of persecution, we are happy to cast our lot with you, our Almighty God. But, when challenge comes, when disputes erupt, when questions get asked –hard, painful questions –we are not always so willing to stand up and be counted; it is easier to lie low and keep quiet.
Forgive us, O God, if, when challenges come, we lower our flag and pull up our drawbridge and withdraw to isolation, leaving you to fight the cause of love, justice and peace with people other than us. Forgive us, eternal God, for such failing and weaknesses.
Forgive us and bless us.
**Amen.**

**Assurance of forgiveness**

I do not feel that I am worthy; I do not feel that I am able; I do not feel that I deserve you, God, and yet I do believe that as I have confessed you have poured out your forgiveness on me. You accept my repentance and keep me to your own.
**Amen.**

**A prayer of praise and thanksgiving**

You have given so much of yourself for us and to us, O God.
**To you be all praise and glory.**
Your sacrifice for us is beyond understanding.
**To you be all praise and glory.**
You reach out to us in love and compassion.
**To you be all praise and glory.**
Your spirit burns within us, warms us, bursts forth from us when we let it.
**To you be all praise and glory.**
Yours is a story to transform the world, to transform lives, to save lives, to enrich lives.
**To you be all praise and glory.**
You are the giver of life, the giver of abundant love.
**To you be all praise and glory.**
In this generation and the next and for ever and ever.
**Amen.**

**Risky business!**

* Divide your group into two teams, and ask each team to provide five volunteers. Only now tell people that the game is ‘Risk it for a biscuit’! Ask one volunteer from each side to come forward for their challenge; if they take it on, they get a biscuit (or similar). Afterwards, ask the volunteers how they felt doing the challenges –was it worth the risk?
* Set challenges appropriate to your context and the age of the person, but here are some examples: drink a cup of water from the back of the cup –no hands; hop around the building on one leg; name the books of the Bible; eat a doughnut without licking your lips; sing a verse of a nursery rhyme.
* Ask everyone to think about a time when they were faced with doing something risky. Did they do it? How did that make them feel? Who has done something risky this week? In today’s worship we explore the risks and opportunities involved in sharing our faith.

Prayer

**A prayer to lead us into hope**

God who sees

In our coming and going

 In our placing and displacing

We bring to you our hope and dreams for a better future

Lord have mercy

**When others will not**

Holy God,
You are our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble. Thank you for your unconditional love and your unfailing hospitality.
On this Sanctuary Sunday, we rededicate ourselves to embody your compassion and commit to intentionally demonstrating neighbourly love to your children in need of sanctuary.
Teach us what it looks like to be the perfect host, to build bigger tables in our communities and to welcome and include those who are different from us.
We pray for all those who have been forced to flee their homes. Lord, keep them safe. Give them courage, resilience, and tangible hope. Guide their feet to people and places who will honour them and uphold their dignity.
Work in and through all those with the power to address the situations from which people have fled, whether war, famine, persecution, or climate change. Help us to understand what part we can play in alleviating the suffering of our neighbours.
In the face of hostility towards refugees and people seeking asylum, help us to model kindness, listening and compassion towards all human beings, even those with whom we disagree.
Keep us strong in our resolve to resist policies and structures that work against your Kingdom of compassion.
God, begin your work of restoration and hope in us.
Amen.

 [***Build a Longer Table***](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LG7ltIV-gbs)
Set to the tune Noel Nouvelet

Build a longer table, not a higher wall,
feeding those who hunger, making room for all.
Feasting together, stranger turns to friend,
Christ breaks walls to pieces; false divisions end.

Build a safer refuge, not a larger jail;
where the weak find shelter, mercy will not fail.
For any place where justice is denied,
Christ will break the jail walls, freeing all inside.

Build a broader doorway, not a longer fence.
Love protects all people, sparing no expense.
When we embrace compassion more than fear,
Christ tears down our fences: all are welcome here.

When we lived as exiles, refugees abroad,
Christ became our doorway to the reign of God.
So must our tables welcome those who roam.
None can be excluded; all must find a home.

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**Hear from those in our communities who have taken great risks**

* It’s Refugee Week. Do you have any refugees in your church or your local community? If so, could you invite them to come and share something of their story, of the risks and challenges they have faced in their journey (obviously being sensitive to their situation)?
* In groups, ideally of mixed ages, discuss what stood out from what was shared. What did they have to stand up for to get to where they are now? How could your church community journey with them more closely? Are there practical things you could help with? W E A

**A simple worship activity**

**Explore the meaning for us of 'taking up our cross'.**

* Read the following quote from Henri Nouwen: ‘Who can save a child from a burning house without taking the risk of being hurt by the flames? Who can listen to a story of loneliness and despair without taking the risk of experiencing similar pains in his own heart and even losing his precious peace of mind? In short: Who can take away suffering without entering it?’ (from *The Wounded Healer*).
* Play some gentle reflective music (e.g.*‘Für Alina’* by Arvo Pärt – avoid something with words, they may be distracting). Lead a time of meditation by asking the following questions. Leave a reasonable time after each one for people to reflect (up to a minute); ask the final one just as your chosen music ends, so that reflection on that question is in silence.-What does sacrificial discipleship look like for you?-When have you had to stand up for your faith?-What conflicts have you encountered with family and friends about your faith? -What risks have you taken concerning your faith?-What does taking up your cross daily look like for you?
* At the end of the reflection, encourage people to share with neighbours, or in small groups, something of what they have been thinking. And end by inviting people to pray for each other and the costs of discipleship, now and during the week ahead. Alternatively, read Psalms 3 and 23 to end. W E S A

**Matthew 10.24-39**

Matthew continues Jesus’ teaching on mission to the world. Jesus points out that the disciples must expect opposition, including possibly from their own families, since Jesus himself has been opposed and called names. He reminds them that God loves and values them as a father.

As we explore Matthew’s Gospel this week, we ask: What is the true cost of discipleship? What is sacrificial living and how do we do it? How do we reignite our passion for our faith, a faith that cannot be hidden?

*There’s something about the call of Jesus that could leave us feeling fearful. So, three times Jesus says ‘don’t be afraid’ (vv:26, 28 and 31). We should fear God for out of that relationship comes the ability to face whatever the world throws at us. So, he stresses that we should not keep our faith hidden (vv:26-27); better for us to proclaim what we know on our terms than have to defend ourselves against our opponents’ cross examination. People might not want to listen and we might be afraid of the consequences of them hearing, but it’s better to take the initiative and go into the wolf pack.*

*Jesus’ reason for our boldness is simple: our opponents can only kill our bodies, they cannot harm our souls if we have put our trust in God. Again, using an illustration from nature (see 6:26-30), Jesus reminds us that birds are two-a-penny and yet God knows all about them. How much more will he care for those who trust him? Finally, in a bold reminder of his authority, Jesus declares that those who remain loyal to him will benefit from his loyalty on the Day of Judgement (v:33). This is not a matter of private faith but public declaration. We cannot be a secret disciple for long: as we live his way, sooner or later we get asked to explain ourselves and how we respond has eternal consequences.*

*Jesus sets our experience of opposition in the overall context of his mission. At first sight, what he says is rather strange because the Messiah was expected to usher in God’s reign of peace and justice (Isaiah 9:6-7;11:6-9). But Jesus’ point is that people have to decide for or against him; no one can be neutral or indifferent. Hence he brings conflict to families, households and nations (a fulfilment of Micah 7:6).*

*The radical nature of Jesus’ call means we have to decide between family and God’s kingdom. And it will feel like a sword being thrust into people’s hearts, including ours. True peace only comes through following Jesus, and it is those who choose not to who will often be the cause of division and conflict. Peacemakers often pay a heavy price. Jesus carried a cross and we are called to do the same. Peace comes through the shedding of blood – Christ’s and possibly ours as well. But the note of hope here is that if we lose our life in Christ, we will find it in God*.

**Andrew Van der Bijl, better known as Brother Andrew.**

Born in 1930 in a small sleepy town called Wett. His father was a blacksmith, and his mother was disabled and although the family were church attenders Andrew didn’t really go to church. His father was quite deaf and every time they went to church, they had to sit in the front pew. But it wasn’t long enough, and the family couldn’t fit. Andrew would hang back obligingly, and his mother would tell him to find a seat elsewhere. He would sit at the back and in the first hymn he would run out the door and go and play in the fields or skate down the canal or anything he liked and he would always with great precision find his way back into church for the last hymn and pick up some comments about the sermon to drop in over lunch to impress his parents. So, Andrew effectively didn’t go to church.

He was quite mischievous growing up, getting involved in wild and courageous things. One of the families in the village who were the butt of his pranks were the Westers. They were very religious and he didn’t like them, their ‘God bless you’ or their ‘we’ll pray for you’ or all those phrases they used all the time. They kept talking about the Germans and impending doom. The other villagers thought they were exaggerating.

But in 1939 they were proved correct. Holland was at war with Germany. In Spring 1940 more refugees pouring into Wett with many of them being Jews. Holland started to flood parts of their farmland because they predicted Germans would invade and it would slow their advance. But the planes and the bombing came first. Rotterdam was blitzed the nearest city. Holland surrendered. German soldiers appeared in the village. But not best and finest soldiers: the older and weightier ones. Andrew stepped up his pranking. Got his fireworks and blasted off at lieutenants place. He poured sugar into their cars. He was a fast runner so he could get away. Even as a child he was daring.

Rationing came and was severe. Andrew remembered the constant hunger. His mother always giving away her food. All able-bodied men were rounded up to fight for the Germans. Finally in 1945 Canadians came in and war was over. He ran 8 km to their camp for a sack of vegetables. His mother wept tears of joy for some food.

Andrew had no interest in being a blacksmith. His father said he should learn a trade and stick to it. Andrew decided to join the army. His parents weren’t happy. The Dutch East indies were a pressing concern. Army training suited Andrew and he loved it. He was good runner and became part of the special commando unit. He liked wearing the uniform and getting the status of being in the military. This was his meaning and purpose. Everyone affirmed him in this except the Westers. Mr Wester sat him down and said ‘I’ll pray for you Andrew that this venture will satisfy’. Andrew thought that was a strange thing to say. Of course, it will satisfy. He was going to get out of this sleepy town. The world will be at his feet. Why would this adventure not satisfy.

In 1946 he left Holland and went with his unit to Indonesia. On the day of his departure his mother pressed a bible into his hand and said ‘please Andrew read it’. But he gave it no further thought.

His time in Indonesia was shocking. He was totally unprepared for what he met. Firstly, he was fighting people who were not in uniform. He hadn’t counted on landmines and had no training. So many were scattered around the villages that it put them on edge. After a three week operation they came to a tiny village and one of their men stepped on a landmine. His Company were on their nerves, and they went berserk. They went through the village and killed everyone who was alive. Just a few metres from him was a woman holding a baby who had been killed by the same bullet. And when he saw that it burned in his mind, and he was a broken man. He wanted to kill himself then and there. When he saw the carnage, he had done, without any command or any real reason he just couldn’t bear it.

But he didn’t kill himself. Instead, he lived with a death wish. He used this motto: get smart and lose your mind. He used to wear a straw hat instead of a helmet. It was a target for the enemies. He would shout out ‘shoot me, here I am!’ He would walk out in battlefield trying to get shot. Then he would get raging drunk. He lived in the desperate hope that he would get killed. But he never was.

He wrote home about his guilt. But the letters back cheered him on saying he was serving King and country’. But one person he did write to was Teal his girlfriend who he had met in Holland while he was training. She took religion seriously and was a devout Christian. When he mentioned to her about his guilt she wrote back about forgiveness and that he needed to find God and this was his answer. He thought she had no idea what it was like out here. So, he continued life as before. Wildly as he could.

One day a bullet went through the top of his hat scraping his skull. Then another went into his ankle. He remembered falling over and blood pouring out. He was taken to hospital. He was devastated. The irony of it was that in his adventure he hadn’t succeeded in getting killed. But now he had a smashed-up ankle meaning he would never run again. Lying in a hospital bed he realised there was no adventure on earth and nothing would satisfy.

Two events happened that changed his trajectory in life.

In a drunken state he had written a letter to his girlfriend but had no intention to send it. He wrote everything he had done that he was ashamed of; uburdening his guilt. When he went to hospital a friend gathered all his possessions and saw that unaddressed envelope and posted it. He told Andy how helpful he had been and Andy went white as a sheet and was about to throttle the guy.

Second thing was the nurses. Many were believers. One had seen the little bible he had and had put it on his bedside. He noticed their wonderful attitude, in contrast with his bitter and cynical heart. He said to one of them how is it that you can be so cheerful. She said, ‘The love of Christ’ then she tapped his bible and said ‘you know you’ve got all the answers right here’ and walked off.

After that comment he picked up and started reading Genesis 1 verse 1. Next day he got a letter from Teal. When he read it he realised she understood. She wrote with great empathy. She said the human heart breaks in the light of God’s love. Read your bible’. She gave him a study guide. As he read the scriptures, he was drawn to it. Didn’t understand why. He was so engrossed in it. His father thought it was a symptom of shell shock.

Some friends took him to churches, and he went to meetings every day. His family were now concerned that he was getting too enthusiastic. But Andrew was drawn by something.

One night there was a big storm and he was lying in bed and put together a prayer to God. He said ‘Lord if you show me the way forward then I will follow you’. He had such a great peace in that moment. In the morning he went to the Westers and said to them about what he had prayed and how he felt. They said ‘You’ve been born again, you’ve been saved - and about time. This is an answer to prayer.’

Andrew began a new life. He was a very enthusiastic Christian. He thought about being a missionary. One of the preachers spotted his enthusiasm. The best training of for a missionary is to start at home and then you’ll be clear if that is your calling he said to Andrew.

Andy got a job at a local chocolate factory in packing. Every other person was a female. They were rough and crude women. He was butt of filthy jokes and their teasing. He was shocked. What should he do. This was his mission field. One lady there was doing the orders. She was delicate and lovely. He felt sorry for her. You shouldn’t be working here he said. He found out that she was a believer and she had been praying for those on factory floor. The two of them worked together to witness to their colleagues and pray for them. Over months the factory was a changed environment. Many came to faith.

Andy still had idea to be a missionary. But he thought he was the worst kind. No education. Left school at 12. Ankle was damaged and couldn’t walk far. Girls at factory called him grandpa. Mostly useless.

One day he was praying out loud, asking Lord what should he do. Every time he was thinking he was saying ‘yes but… instead of yes. So he said ‘Lord the answer is yes and I’ll go wherever you want me to go’. And he stood up and said ‘I’m going to make a step of obedience. That is my yes’. And as he stepped down there was a crack in his ankle and the pain shot up his leg. Then another pain. As he started to walk further, he realised his ankle was quite stable and he started to walk normally. And he realised that in that moment of obedience that God had healed his ankle.

He ended up going to a bible college in Glasgow Scotland that trained people to live by faith. But Teal didn’t feel comfortable. She hoped Andrew would take the promotion he had at the factory and Andrew would settle down but now he was talking about being a missionary. She realised that the college was not affiliated to a church or denomination – there was no job at the end of it. So, she said if you go to Bible College in Scotland that will be the last you see of me. This was a blow to Andy. He thought they would be married. But he had such conviction he should go to Glasgow that he never saw Teal again.

Not for the first time his obedience had a price to pay.

At Bible College he saw a magazine for a youth festival in Warsaw in Poland. The year was 1955. It was a new thing for festivals after the war. He wrote and said can I come.. He was overwhelmed by the number of youths pouring in to Poland. People everywhere shouting benefits of socialism and communism. They were all saying God is dead. He spotted a church and went to the church and it was full which was a surprise. He spoke to the pastor. He said all free to come so long as you speak about things allowed to along party lines. If make some compromises then all stay open. Andy got the impression that they were being watching all the time. He went to another church and discovered they were all older people. No children at all.

On the last weekend he woke early and wanted to think about all these things he had seen and prayed for the churches. As he walked through the streets he heard sounds of marching. Crowds came for the parade of triumph to mark the end of youth festival. All in red ties clapping in unison that man was his own master and the future was their own. The effect was overwhelming for him as he realised he was seeing the new evangelists of this era. The communists. There was no one forcing these youths. They truly believed that they were the masters of their fate and that God was dead and the state was God.

Suddenly a verse came into his mind. ‘Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die.’ Knew it was from the Lord and that this was his mission and the Lord wanted him to strengthen the church in these countries that were being closed off to the world. How could he, one man, do anything? Everyone was actively embracing communism. Then he remembered his step of ‘yes’. He also knew that one man with God is a majority.

Spread of communism spread like wildfire after the war. But the promise of freedom and equality proved to be an illusion, as those who said something different or held different beliefs started to disappear. No one asked questions. Bibles became hard to find. If you went out to buy one then you were registered and they checked your attendance to the official state run churches. If not there, then you could be arrested or questioned. To be a Christian was seen as being unpatriotic and going against the progress of the state.

Soon believers were not allowed to get jobs. Children were brainwashed in schools to believe that only the foolish and old could be gullible enough for religion. That they don’t understand progress. Many schools expelled Christian families., businesses owned by Christians failed. Christians were forced to the edges. Communism becoming stronger.

Andrew visited many countries and saw that bibles were harder to come by. In Czechoslovakia he saw a woman hold a bible up over her head so that the rows at the back could see it. Pastors were preaching but their bible had been confiscated and so they preached with no bible. Other places people copied out pieces of the Bible quickly so they could take a copy for themselves. So Andrew decided he needed to get Bibles for these people.

The Westers gave him their own car. A little blue Beetle. He decided to drive round communist Europe and deliver Bibles. When people gave him hundreds of bibles he realised that trying to hide them was going to be a difficult thing. He could put them in pockets and in the doors, then he put them in his sleeping bag and his tent and then the leftovers went in his suitcase. He tried the least patrolled borders.

In 1977 he took his car full of bibles and went to Yugoslavia. Then he realised that these checkpoints were really strict. He was in a line of cars and every one was being checked. They would confiscate things and throw things out. He thought ‘I’ve got Bibles in my suitcase . if you open the suitcase you will see them. If you open my sleeping bag you will find them’. So he prayed a prayer:

He said ‘Lord you made blind eyes see. Please now make these seeing eyes blind.’

He stepped out of the car. The guards grabbed his camping gear and looked into his stove and sleeping bag. Another looked at his suitcase and opened it. There in plain sight for all to see was three bibles. Andrew thought ‘Oh no’. but then the guard shut it and said – right get all your stuff and off you go’. Andrew thought the Lord has answered his prayer. He made all those seeing eyes blind.

God over and over again protected those Bibles and Andrew. All of the Bibles he took managed to get into the country.

But there were other challenges. As the countries became more closed and dangerous then it was hard to trust anyone. You couldn’t ask for directions: ‘I’m looking for pastor Joe do you know where he lives?’ You had to find your way yourself or be cryptic. You couldn’t write and say I’m delivering bibles at three o’clock be there. Letters were censored.

The Dutch Bible Society knew people across Europe. Jameel was a pastor in Yugoslavia. Andy wrote a careful letter to him. But got no reply. But knew Lord wanted him to go anyway. But Jameel had moved house and not got the letter. It was eventually forwarded to Jameel who got it on the day Andrew arrived. Should he bother? He catched the train to his old house. He thought it was ridiculous. He couldn’t ask locals ‘have you seen a Dutch man with a lot of bibles?’ It would just attract attention. Andy knew none of this. His blue car was coming down the street. He parked outside, just as Jameel walked towards the house. They looked at each other and they knew they had found each other. Jameel realised that the Lord had orchestrated this appointment. Through Jameel Andy met so many other believers who could interpret for him and so Andy was able to travel and preach around the country.

Communication was another factor, In Romania the strategy was to make Christians suspicious of other Christians. Others had been betrayed and so they were wary of Christians. Andy had to be wary of who to trust. Christians weren’t open to him because they feared he was part of the secret police. On one occasion he met pastors and this old pastor eyed him with suspicion. They had no language in common. Andy thought not sure if he should give the bibles to them. He saw in the office a small Romanian bible. He got it and put it next to his Dutch bible and decided to use the Bible to speak. 1 Cor 16 20 and pointed to the reference. Pastor turned to his and read it; ‘All the brethren greet you’ and pastor’s face lit up. He turned to Prov 25 25. ‘As cold water to a weary soul is good news from a far country’. Andy turned to Philemon: ‘I thank my God making mention of you always and hearing of your faith in Lord Jesus’. The pastor broke into a huge smile and said ‘we have great joy in your love for the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you brother’.

So he knew he could trust the pastor and handed over the Romanian bibles. They clutched them to their hearts so much did they want to read the Lords word.

In Holland Andrew had met another girl. They shared the same call. But what a sacrifice to be the wife of Andrew: he was away most of the time. A super risky job with no pay . All he had to offer was a room above a tool shed. So when he proposed to Corrie. He said you would have to be crazy to say yes. But I hope you do. And just to make matters worst he had to rush off to another smuggling trip. When he came back she said yes. Their honeymoon was in Communist Europe. On their wedding day Corrie said to him ‘we don’t know where the roads will lead but lets go there together. ‘

It was a hard life for her but she valued his work and shared in it.

Andrew saw time and time again Christians who were over joyed to get a glimpse of a Bible in their own language. He saw the unending need for Bibles across Communist Europe.

Some pastors refused bibles. So tortured and beaten that they couldn’t do it again. So Andy also saw his work as trying to strengthen those bruised reeds. What they endured in Russia was unspeakable.

As more joined, they expanded their work. They went to China. Managed to deliver a million bibles to China. He loaded a ship full and floated it to a remote beach in China and some Chinese believers gathered at night to collect them and then hurried off.

Open Doors organisation sprung from his work. When Communist Europe collapsed their focus shifted to the Islamic world, where it was very hard to buy a bible and pastors and Christian leaders were disappearing or accused of blasphemy and churches bombed or raided.

Andrew visited [Pakistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan) in the 2010s, and attempted to meet with members of the [Taliban](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliban).[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_van_der_Bijl#cite_note-CT2-10) Van der Bijl criticized the [US invasion of Afghanistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_%282001%E2%80%932021%29) in 2001 and the [2003 invasion of Iraq](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq), stating that American evangelical Christians were too supportive of these wars.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_van_der_Bijl#cite_note-CT1-2) He also criticized the [killing of Osama bin Laden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killing_of_Osama_bin_Laden), having previously prayed for him, and called the operation "murder".[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_van_der_Bijl#cite_note-CT2-10)

Van der Bijl died at age 94 on 27 September 2022;[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_van_der_Bijl#cite_note-Telegraph-7)[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_van_der_Bijl#cite_note-14) he had been married for 59 years to his wife, Corry (1931–2018).[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_van_der_Bijl#cite_note-15)[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_van_der_Bijl#cite_note-16) They had continued to live in Holland and were survived by five children and 11 grandchildren.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_van_der_Bijl#cite_note-17) At the time of his death, Open Doors was active in over 60 countries. The ministry yearly distributes 300,000 Bibles and 1.5 million Christian books and materials. The group is active in providing relief, aid, community development, and trauma counseling, while advocating for persecuted Christians around the globe.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_van_der_Bijl#cite_note-CT1-2)

We read the words from Matthew 10:

What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. **28**Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. **29**Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+10&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23447b)] **30**And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. **31**So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

**32**“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.

May God give us the courage of Andrew to witness to the gospel.

**Prayers of intercession**

God of life, of light and of hope,
we pray for the people and the nation of Ukraine,
that the atrocities committed there would come to light
and those responsible for war crimes would be brought to justice.
We pray for all places where massacres and crimes against humanity are rife,
for those whose murders are hidden from the eyes of the world,
for communities and minorities who live in fear.

God of life of light and of hope,
**hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those places where abuse happens
behind closed doors, in homes and in institutions.
We pray for vulnerable adults, for children,
for animals and for all those who have no voice,
for those who cry in the night and pretend they are okay in the day.

God of life of light and of hope,
**hear our prayer.**

We pray for your church,
that she may have the courage to be unpopular,
that she would have the desire and the determination
to speak words of truth and compassion and challenge,
that she would have the humility to work collaboratively
and the boldness to act decisively and urgently.
Give to each of us the energy of your Spirit
that would not fear the consequences of sharing our faith
but be bursting to share your love with sincerity, sensitivity and strength.

God of life of light and of hope,
**hear our prayer.**

We pray for those on our hearts,
those we know and those whose stories have touched us.
We pray for those missing at sea,
those who have gone missing from home,
those who are missing out on love and encouragement in their lives.
We pray for those we miss seeing and entrust them all to you.

God of life of light and of hope,
**hear our prayer - in Jesus’ name.
Amen.**



**A way into prayer**

[insert complete prayer]



**A prayer for all ages together**

Indescribable, uncontainable God,
thank you that you are amazing
and love me, no matter what.
You put the stars in the sky,
and you know me by name.
Thank you that I mean so much to you.
**Amen.**



**A sending out prayer**

Jesus, you walked to the cross,
and paid the ultimate sacrifice for us, for our freedom;
may we walk with you this week as we learn what it is to truly take up our cross and follow you.
May we shout from the rooftops
and burn with your love inside us, so that others may see you too.
**Amen.**